

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE:**EXECUTIVE HOST**

DATE: AUGUST 1, 2006

**Committee Members Present:**

Supervisor Caimano  
Supervisor Wm. Thomas  
Supervisor Tessier  
Supervisor Barody  
Mayor Robert Blais, Village of Lake  
George  
Pamela Morin, Group  
Tour/Convention Promoter

**Committee Member Absent:**

Leonard Fosbrook, President, Warren  
County Economic Development  
Corp.

**Others Present:**

NYS Association of Fire Chiefs:  
Thomas LaBelle, Executive Director  
Paul F. Schonewolf, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Site Solutions Worldwide:  
Brigitte Connors  
Lake George Forum:  
John Lemery, Counsel  
Jason Sherry, General Manager  
Fort William Henry:  
Fred Austin  
Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk  
Supervisor Gabriels  
Supervisor Kenny  
Supervisor Merlino  
Supervisor Geraghty  
Bill Dutcher, Americade  
Tony Hill, Lake George Mirror  
JoAnn McKinstry, Confidential Secretary,  
Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal  
Services  
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office  
Specialist

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Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

Motion was made by Mr. W. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2006 Executive Host Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to John Lemery, who introduced himself as a partner with the law firm of Lemery and Greisler, LLC and counsel to the Lake George Forum, as well as Jason Sherry, General Manager and Principal Operating Officer of the Lake George Forum.

As a result of a group of local and regional investors, Mr. Lemery related the Lake George Forum was constructed in 2003 to accommodate various trade shows and events. Over the past several months, he said he became aware of the lengthy dialog that had transpired regarding a convention center in Warren County and realized the committee and board members must make some difficult decisions relative to financing and location. He expounded the Lake George Forum had

attempted to provide alternative options to the Board as a possible location for building a convention facility.

Upon receipt of the revised Pinnacle Study the Board of Supervisors commissioned, and after a detailed review with the architects, Mr. Lemery apprised the Lake George Forum could be retrofitted on the site to meet the demands and criteria established by the study. Briefly Mr. Lemery articulated the contrasts between the Pinnacle Study Recommendations and the Lake George Forum Expansion Plan. In addition, he discussed many advantages of the expansion plan including the new lodging facilities that were located within walking distance that could serve as host for the large events.

Mr. Lemery advised that the owners of the Lake George Forum were willing to bear the construction costs associated with the expansion and would offer Warren County the option to acquire it as a turnkey facility for \$13.5 million, a savings to the County of \$4.5 million. In the alternative, he stated, option 2 would necessitate the County enter into a lease agreement with the Lake George Forum for approximately \$775,000 per annum. An asset to the Lake George Forum expansion plan, he noted, would be the revenue derived from the operating ice during the winter months when other convention centers could potentially operate at a deficit. All equipment, furniture and fixtures that would necessitate the smooth operation of the facility could be acquired, commented Mr. Lemery.

In summation, Mr. Lemery stated it was their belief it was a reasonable alternative that met the Pinnacle Study requirements but asked Jason Sherry, General Manager of the Lake George Forum, to describe the layout of the expanded facility.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Jason Sherry, who reviewed the existing Lake George Forum facility, and explained the significant improvements offered by this expansion plan. In order to achieve the required number of parking spaces, Mr. Sherry said they suggested double deck parking, which would be included in the purchase price. Mr. Sherry apprised the expansion should be completed in time for the 2008 event and, therefore, did not pose any difficulty; however, he surmised, a 2007 time frame might be unachievable. Mr. Sherry mentioned he had discussed relocating some of the tent structures from other locations to the Lake George Forum and perhaps constructing a 20,000 foot tent adjacent to the building.

Mr. Caimano informed the committee he had asked the representatives of the Lake George Forum to return and offer their presentation to the Executive Host Committee as an alternative for the Fire Chiefs Convention.

Coming from the Town of Bolton, and according to the proposed convention center expansion, Mr. Gabriels voiced his concern for adequate parking. Mr. Sherry concurred with Mr. Gabriels apprehension but assured him it would be addressed. He suggested perhaps the net savings to the County might result in other possible parking solutions in and around the Town/Village of Lake George.

With respect to the 2006 NYS Fire Chiefs Convention, Mr. Caimano inquired if there were additional matters that needed to be addressed and Mr. LaBelle replied he did not believe so. Mr. Caimano stated he thought there were unresolved financial issues pertaining to an invoice from the tent company as well as matters involving Warren County. Mr. LaBelle apprised this week they submitted the \$30,000 payment for electricity from the tent company as well as the \$15,000 for bus transportation. Mr. Caimano remarked it was his understanding that most vendors provided power to their booths and Mr. LaBelle indicated that was not included in their price quote.

Regarding the additional cost for bus transportation, Mr. LaBelle stated it was his understanding, based on a contract with Warren County, buses would be available at all contracted hotels within the County. Due to a late decision by the County not to provide the transportation, he said the Fire Chiefs paid the additional \$15,000. Mr. Caimano stated Mr. LaBelle should have been aware because the decision was made at one of the many meetings at Mayor Blais' Office and not at the end as he had suggested. Mr. LaBelle advised that any additional remuneration would be forthcoming after the close of their fiscal year, which was September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Turning everyone's attention to the 2007 NYS Fire Chiefs Convention, Mr. Caimano asked Mr. LaBelle for his opinion relative to the Lake George Forum as a possible convention site, the number of structures, sponsorships, et cetera. Mr. LaBelle responded the Lake George Forum proposal was an interesting concept but the issue remained that the Fire Chiefs were utilizing County facilities and were unable to negotiate vendor space due to a lack of site procurement. He said all documentation had been assembled and was ready for shipment assuming the same layout as 2006.

Mr. Caimano stated last year the board changed locations due to equipment height and space restrictions within the tents and if he recalled, most of the equipment was low level. Mr. LaBelle apologized, and said he did not mean to suggest fire trucks would be located inside the tents; rather it was how they loaded/unloaded their exhibits. The truck manufacturers appreciated their location on the Beach Road and, therefore, he recommended utilizing the same footprint for 2007 but suggested investigating other possible tent companies.

According to Steve Billings of Regal Tent Productions, Mr. LaBelle commented the skylights allowed thermal heat to enter the tents. He said he did not know whether additional lighting within the tents would increase the temperature but assumed the lights generated a fair amount of heat. Mr. LaBelle related that the issue became how to increase the lighting without increasing the temperature. Mr. Barody interjected he only received one request for additional lighting but obviously that depended on the vendor and their product. Fred Austin, of the Fort William Henry, stated as far as he was concerned, the parking lot lighting was easily correctable and offered some possible solutions but Mr. LaBelle added it was not their responsibility to make the appropriate changes.

Mr. Caimano stated the committee must decide for 2007 who was responsible for the tents, whose structure it was, who would secure the sponsorships and how payment would be made. He remarked when the convention was held in Syracuse, the Fire Chiefs Association paid New York State for the buildings, but Warren County could not afford to fund the tents for 2007 and was looking to Mr. LaBelle for guidance and ideas that worked in everyone's best interest.

Mr. LaBelle apprised a meeting had been scheduled with Americade that the Warren County Attorney, Paul Dusek, requested he be invited to attend. Recognizing that most corporations commence arrangements in September and depending on who was interested in partnering in the convention (i.e., Elvis Festival, Americade, Tow Trucks), he said he thought they had enough time. Last October everyone thought they had enough time, but that's human nature, commented Mr. Caimano.

Another item for discussion, noted Mr. Caimano, was the issue relating to the sponsorships and he suggested Mr. LaBelle and his organization meet with the Lake George Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Connors responded this was brought up at the last meeting and they would be more than happy to be included in the meeting but were waiting for an invitation. In addition, Mr. Caimano said he thought Supervisor Gabriels from the Town of Bolton, Supervisor Tessier and Mayor Blais from the Village of Lake George, should attend the meeting to address the two issues relating to sponsorship and tents.

Mr. LaBelle explained he was under the assumption today he would be leaving the last meeting with an agreement based on size and number of structures, but now he was currently a month behind. While the material had already been printed, he said he could not sell ad space that did not exist and assumed the same partners that were involved last year would be involved again this year. Mr. LaBelle related he understood the County wished to renegotiate the relationship of fund distribution, but it was August 1<sup>st</sup> and he was unsure about the position of the County. The three buildings would be exactly where they were for 2006 provided there was an executed contract stating specifics, Mr. Caimano remarked. Mr. LaBelle related there was nothing to sign, because any changes to the contract had to take place last month and that was the reason they were adamant the meeting take place within 30 days of the end of the 2006 conference. Based on the agreement last year, Mr. LaBelle said the opportunity to amend the agreement had expired and, therefore, they expected to see three structures. As far as he was concerned, their homework had been completed relative to the materials needed to sell advertising space on the structures but they had to base the sales on the current agreement. However, he said, he could not give the other partners definitive answers because he was unaware of Warren County's share of contribution. He said it was his understanding it was the desire of Warren County to renegotiate the original contract (that was not finalized until late February) relative to the percentage of revenue the County received. Mr. Caimano replied the

only discussion pertained to the cost that was to be partially defrayed from the sale of sponsorships.

Ms. Connors expounded the sale of sponsorships was a means to assist the County in raising funds to supplement the tents rather than become an obligation on the part of the Fire Chiefs or Site Solutions. She said while they all agreed they were late in the process, the County executed a contract obligating themselves for two years with a three year option to provide the structures. Mr. Caimano emphasized they originally discussed \$14,000 for tents which escalated into \$200,000 for tents because the County was informed sponsorships would be sold to cover the cost of the tents.

As General Manager of the Forum, Mr. Sherry indicated this was a complicated process but decreasing expenses would make next year's event more successful. He reiterated 1/8 of a mile from the Fort William Henry Resort was a 30,000 square foot building that had all the power infrastructure necessary to provide for the vendors and was available for a third of the cost of one tent. He encouraged the County and the Board to consider the Lake George Forum's proposed option to host the Fire Chiefs Convention. In response to Ms. Connors inquiry, Mr. Sherry demonstrated the location of the tents utilizing the exact structures as 2006 and noted it could be connected to the overhead door.

Mr. LaBelle indicated the County provided the facility and he needed to be informed two months ago of the location of the host facility. At no time had the Board apprised him of a change in location; therefore, when the 30 day window had passed, he said, he forwarded the document on to the printer. Mr. W. Thomas asked if Mr. LaBelle had any concerns about relocating to the Lake George Forum and he replied his biggest hurdle would be vendor satisfaction between the two facilities. Mr. Caimano suggested charging different rates but Mr. LaBelle commented that deadline had passed as well. Ms. Connors informed the committee that reservations for 2007 were being made by vendors when they left this year. Mr. Sherry said he expected the Lake George Forum and the County could agree on a contract for that one-week period with or without tents for under \$30,000.

Mr. Dusek entered the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Mayor Robert Blais of the Village of Lake George commented he had an enormous amount of compassion for Mr. LaBelle for planning this complicated event. He acknowledged that if anyone was looking for a savings to jump out of the sky, then the County needed to contract with the Lake George Forum; however, if they were looking to put this matter together within the next couple weeks, then he suggested consulting the County Attorney. Ms. Connors reminded the committee Warren County approached Site Solutions proposing to host the Fire Chiefs Conference. In a recent conversation, Mr. LaBelle apprised one vendor regretted not having a booth at the 2006 convention but promised they would be here in 2007. However, he said, this vendor was assuming the Fort William Henry was the host site.

Pursuant to the current contract, Mr. Caimano stated Warren County had until September 1, 2006 to modify the contract and not August 1<sup>st</sup> as previously stated. Mr. Dusek related the contract entered into between the Fire Chiefs and Warren County specifically provided three years of events with specific structures (tents) but either party had the opportunity to terminate or change the terms of the contract on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year based on a concern or difficulty with continuing to hold the convention in Lake George.

Mr. Sherry indicated the Fire Chiefs could sell sponsorships as part of their rental of the Lake George Forum and the revenue could be split according to whatever agreement the County made with the Fire Chiefs.

Mr. Caimano reiterated the proposed offer to utilize the Lake George Forum with an attached tent and the parking lot to accommodate the outside exhibitors for \$30,000 plus the cost of the tents. Mr. Sherry explained if he understood the square footage of the tents correctly, they would actually have more space.

Ms. Pamela Morin, Group Tour Convention Promoter, queried whether the move to the Lake George Forum would affect any other major or minor issues. Mr. LaBelle responded three issues immediately jumped to mind: the onsite educational programs at the Fort William Henry; re-educating the attendees with respect to transportation and parking; and the rate per square foot. As Mr. LaBelle was aware, Mr. W. Thomas expounded the cost of the tent structures funded by the County was so exorbitant, they were looking for alternative options. Ms. O'Connor reminded the committee the Fire Chiefs had been in one location for 30 years, in Syracuse for eight years and when Warren County proposed to be the host site for eight or ten years, a lot of these discussions had already taken place and therefore forewarned.

In response to Mr. Kenny's question, Mr. Sherry apprised the Lake George Forum already had existing contracts with the Elvis Festival and Americade. Mr. Gabriels queried if there would be any construction concerns given the time frame suggested by the Lake George Forum and Mr. Sherry stated it was their full intent to have the facility up and running by June because of the existing contracts.

Motion was made by Mr. W. Thomas and seconded by Mr. Tessier to move the location of the Fire Chiefs Convention from the Fort William Henry to the Lake George Forum and forward this request on to the full Board of Supervisors at the August 18, 2006 meeting.

Mr. LaBelle queried what would happen if the Board voted against moving the convention site from the Fort William Henry to the Lake George Forum at the August 18, 2006 Board Meeting. Mr. Caimano responded if the committee recommended moving the site, he surmised it would pass the approval of the Board but he could not guarantee it.

In response to Mr. W. Thomas' inquiry why such few sponsorships had been sold, Mr. LaBelle related the contract was not executed until March and, therefore, the sponsors did not have adequate time to raise the funds. Americade had the same difficulty the Fire Chiefs had in obtaining sponsors, added Ms. Connors. Based on the contract, Mr. LaBelle emphasized it was in everyone's financial interest to sell the sponsorships.

For one year, without forcing the Board to buy into the expansion proposal of \$13.5 million, Mr. Gabriels queried about the same possible lease option for 2008 as 2007. Mr. Caimano said he did not want to confuse the lease option with the convention center as one had nothing to do with the other. Mr. Dusek apprised the contracts could be drafted so they did not conflict.

Mr. Geraghty stated he was concerned about relocating the site year after year which could sabotage the event. Mr. LaBelle related his contract with the Fire Chief's Association expired in October of 2007 but anticipated it being renewed; however, it would become difficult to make each event different year after year. Mr. Barody commented he would vote in opposition because he felt there were many questions that needed to be answered before moving the location. He said he recommended the committee examine the logistic issues, costs issues and possible sponsorship probabilities. While Mr. W. Thomas said he agreed with Mr. Barody that the Fire Chiefs needed immediate and definitive answers, he further stated that the committee must decide how to fund the tents if they remained at the Fort William Henry. Mr. LaBelle queried whether the assumption was Warren County revenue did not exceed the tent expense and Mr. Kenny added the impact was far greater than just the \$270,000. In order to make the convention a bigger success, Mr. Barody suggested Warren County maintain their current commitment and allow the committee to take additional time to review the proposed expansion of the Lake George Forum.

Mr. W. Thomas commented he would like to withdraw his motion.

During last year's meetings, the Lake George Forum was mentioned many times and the Fire Chiefs decided not to utilize their facility, related Mayor Blais; therefore, he queried, whether additional vendor space was needed. Mr. LaBelle reported he was unable to accommodate 100 vendors for 2006 and anticipated 200 vendors for 2007. Mayor Blais recommended Site Solutions accept the extra vendors utilizing the Lake George Forum as additional vendor space which would defray the cost of the tents. Mr. Tessier commented if there was \$200,000 worth of sponsorships, the Fire Chiefs could receive a percentage of vendor sale proceeds. The Lake George Forum had already been considered, said Mr. LaBelle, but the issue was not transportation, rather how do they price the space. In addition, he stated, he discussed this matter with the Fire Chiefs' board and their answer was no.

Mr. Caimano recommended adjourning this meeting until next week to allow all parties an opportunity to discuss the options that had been discussed today. Mr. Austin, as representative of the Fort William Henry, apprised they hosted the Fire Chiefs Convention for the good of the community but they lost money. Mr. Dusek stated before committing to this contract, it would be important for the Board and committee to make arrangements with the Fort William Henry so the County could fulfill their obligations.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Barody and seconded by Mr. Gabriels, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 2:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist